

I wholeheartedly support the proposed bill SB01076, AAC AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS and wish to go on record to urge passage of this important act.

Many of us have had to watch terminally ill loved ones suffer long-term pain, weakening and in some cases asphyxiation, without any right to a voice in their own care. We have had to watch helplessly as this suffering can extend for weeks and months, wearing down the patient – sometimes to skeletal thinness, and in torment unless drugged into complete unconsciousness. (And those receiving such drugs are the luckier ones.)

This treatment seems to some of us like a wrongheaded adherence to restrictions imposed by the religious views of other people, not the kind of considerate, patient-directed end-of-life care that we think everyone deserves. We favor respect for the dying. We favor hospice care that respects the convictions and wishes of the dying, takes their family members' preferences into account, and spares everyone a form of pain and torment that is not just wasteful but cruel. In a democracy, let us give each citizen the right to have their individual choice heard. We don't give government or other citizens the right to dictate how we live, so why should we let the determine how we die?

We agree that expert medical care and advice are needed in order to determine which patients are in the terminal stage and approximately how long they can be expected to live. That expertise, rather than the religious and personal views of others, should be considered official and binding – along with patients' individual preferences. Once a patient reaches the terminal stage, we believe that they should have the right to have the medical profession honor the choices that a patient has made and put in writing, to decide which medical acts can be taken on their behalf. If this choice includes aid in dying, then we believe such aid should be available, in the most humane way possible.

We urge our representatives to honor the views of so many citizens, such as ourselves, who favor aid to dying for ourselves and/or for those dear to us. We believe it is fundamental in our democracy to consider issues of dying as part of our fundamental rights. We plead with our representatives to honor that right and respect it.